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Dramatic Publishing



The Wonderful Western Hat

One Act Comedy
by
Ev Miller



The Dramatic Publishing Company

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(THE WONDERFUL WESTERN HAT)

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THE WONDERFUL WESTERN HAT

A One-Act Play
For Two Men, One Woman and Extras

CHARACTERS

ADRIAN WILLIS in his middle 30's
SALLY LADD in her late 20's or early 30's
MR. SAUNDERS in his 50's

EXTRAS: ELEVATOR OPERATOR, NEWSSTAND
GIRL, THREE "WILD ROVERS" (FIRST BOY,
SECOND BOY, THIRD BOY), MAN in the STORE,
FIRST LADY on the STREET, SECOND LADY on the
STREET, ELDERLY LADY

TIME: Present
PLACE: A large city

Playing Time: 30 minutes

THE WONDERFUL WESTERN HAT

SCENE: *The stage is set with several locations. R is a desk at which ADRIAN WILLIS sits as the curtain opens. To his left and more to the rear is a filing cabinet. As the curtain rises, SALLY LADD is there, going through a file. Immediately behind WILLIS is a door. Progressing across the stage to the left is a mock elevator (it might be no more than a large opening in the rear wall; players pantomime the movement in this elevator). A few feet more L is a small newsstand. A few magazines and newspapers are displayed. Across the stage and to the extreme left is the western store. A few western hats and belts are displayed. Above the entrance to this store is a sign which says simply, "Western Clothing Store." The only other property is a park bench LC. Actually, the entire play could even be done bare stage with only tables and folding chairs rather than with extensive scenery. As the curtain opens, ADRIAN WILLIS is sitting, very busy, at his desk. He is a small man in his mid-thirties, very non-descript and very introverted. He wears a plain dark gray suit with a white shirt and a colorless tie. SALLY LADD is a plain woman in her late 20's or early 30's. She busies herself at the filing cabinet for a moment. Suddenly, the back door bursts open and MR. SAUNDERS enters. He is an imposing man in his 50's. He carries a sheet of paper.*

SAUNDERS. Willis!

WILLIS (*very low*). Yes, Mr. Saunders...

SAUNDERS. Willis, I just got this letter from Beck Associates a few minutes ago. They say in here they have not yet received the order they sent in two weeks ago.

WILLIS. Yes, that's right.

SAUNDERS. May I ask why not?

WILLIS. Well, sir...

SAUNDERS. Speak up, man... I can barely hear you.

WILLIS (*a bit louder*). Well, sir, I've been running so far behind in my orders and you told me to fill the larger ones first... and since theirs was for...

SAUNDERS. Well, we can't afford to antagonize anyone with this kind of lag time, even a small company. Can't you get it done faster than this?

WILLIS. Well, uh, sir, as I said, I am really swamped and the orders just keep piling up...

SAUNDERS. Well, maybe you'll just have to put in some extra time, then, right?

WILLIS. Yes, sir...

SAUNDERS. What?

WILLIS. I said, 'yes, sir.' I will...

SAUNDERS. Just remember, Willis, that if you can't do the job, we can find someone who can.

WILLIS. Yes, sir... I'll... I'll try to get caught up. It's just that this is the peak season and with just myself doing all the ordering...

SAUNDERS. And I told you a long time ago that we cannot afford anymore staff! You'll just have to handle it yourself. Miss Ladd, come in in about five minutes. I have a letter for you to take.

LADD. Yes, Mr. Saunders... (*SAUNDERS disappears through the door. LADD looks at WILLIS for a long*

moment. WILLIS has gone back to his work, more furiously than ever. Finally.) Why do you let him talk to you that way?

WILLIS (*looking up, surprised*). What?

LADD. Why do you let Saunders treat you that way?

Why didn't you tell him you've been working until six or six-thirty every night and you've been coming back on Saturdays? Why didn't you tell him that the job has just gotten too big for one person?

WILLIS (*very flustered*). Well... well... I did tell him...

LADD. Yes, about a year ago. And I heard the way you told him.

WILLIS. I don't understand what you mean, Miss Ladd.

LADD. Oh! (*She turns to the filing cabinet, near tears.*)

WILLIS (*he stands*). Please, Miss Ladd. I don't understand what you're getting at.

LADD (*she turns to him*). You let everybody treat you so badly. Then, you just end up apologizing to them for it.

WILLIS. Why, I don't...

LADD. You do, too! You've got to start standing up for your rights a little.

WILLIS (*quietly, he turns to his desk*). My job is important to me.

LADD. He isn't going to fire you! This office would fall to pieces if you weren't here! He doesn't have the foggiest notion how important you are to this entire operation. Yet, you just let him bully you all the time. You let everybody do that.

WILLIS. I'm sorry...

LADD. There you go again! I stand here and insult you and tell you that you let everybody bully you and you say, 'I'm sorry.'

WILLIS (*without thinking*). Sorry... (*She stamps her foot in frustration.*) I... I guess I'm just not a very assertive person, Miss Ladd. I never have been.

LADD. Well, there's a big difference in being assertive and letting people push you around completely. A very big difference. (*She looks at him closely. He looks down at his paperwork.*) Look, Mr. Willis, I didn't mean to hurt your feelings, but I've been working here as his secretary for two years now and I see how hard you work and how honest you are and how everybody takes advantage of you. How long has it been since you got a raise?

WILLIS. Well, it's been a couple of years, of course, but...

LADD. Remember that I handle the payroll... (*His head goes down.*) From what I can see, it's been longer than two years. You deserve twice as much as you're getting.

WILLIS. Oh, not twice as...

LADD. Look, I guess I'm just poking my nose into your business. If that's the way you want your life to be, it's your concern, I suppose. It's just that I think you're a real nice guy and I hate to see you treated this way.

WILLIS (*surprised*). You think I'm nice?

(*SAUNDERS opens the door and pokes his head in.*)

SAUNDERS. Miss Ladd, are you coming in?

LADD (*picking up her notebook*). Yes, I'm on my way.

(*She exits into the room. WILLIS looks after her and turns back to his desk. He works for a moment. SAUNDERS and LADD return through the door.*)

SAUNDERS. Willis, Miss Ladd and I have to run down to Dispatch and then we're going to call it a day. See that the doors are locked.

WILLIS. Yes, I will...

SAUNDERS. Perhaps you should stay a while past five in order to get caught up a bit.

WILLIS. Yes. I will do that. Thank you for the suggestion, sir. *(Ladd's eyes roll back in her head.)*

LADD. Good night, Mr. Willis!

WILLIS. Yes, good night, Miss Ladd.

(They exit. WILLIS works for a moment longer, checks his wristwatch, and then rises slowly. As he leaves the office, the spot dims on that area. WILLIS approaches the elevator. The ELEVATOR MAN waits for him impatiently. He is a sour, small man, quite old.)

WILLIS. Good evening...

ELEVATOR MAN. Hurry up, please, will you, Willis? I want to get out of this building before I'm too old to walk. Why are you always the last one?

WILLIS *(softly)*. You don't have to wait for me... I told you I can walk down four flights.

ELEVATOR MAN. Just step inside...

(WILLIS enters and they pantomime the descent of the elevator handle.)

ELEVATOR MAN. What a rotten day! This piece of garbage broke down twice.

WILLIS. It did?

ELEVATOR MAN. Yeah, and I suppose old man Saunders won't pay any money to have it fixed proper

either. (*Silence.*) Gossip has it that he might be considerin' a new elevator that won't need an operator.

WILLIS. I wouldn't know... Mr. Saunders does not discuss his plans with me...

ELEVATOR MAN (*looking at WILLIS*). Yeah, I guess he wouldn't. Well, I don't guess I got to worry. I don't think he'll spring for that kinda dough and anyway, I only got one more year till retirement. I don't suppose they could get it installed much before that.

WILLIS. I wouldn't...

ELEVATOR MAN (*interrupting*). Anyway, for what he pays me, he's gettin' by mighty cheap. But, I did manage to get a dollar an hour raise out of him last month.

WILLIS (*surprised*). You did? A dollar an hour?

ELEVATOR MAN. You bet! Went right into his office and told him. You got to get rough with those guys once in awhile. (*He pantomimes a stop and opening the door.*) Here we are... (*WILLIS exits and trips on the floor opening which is not flush with the elevator.*)

Watch your step, man! I told you that a hundred times!

WILLIS. Sorry... good night...

ELEVATOR MAN. Yeah? I don't see anything that's good about it!

(As the light dims on him, WILLIS approaches the newsstand. A GIRL stands behind the counter, busily doing her fingernails.)

WILLIS (*laying a bill on the counter*). I'd like a newspaper... the usual.

GIRL. Well, lay the quarter on the counter and take one, like you always do.

WILLIS. I... I don't have the right change...

GIRL. Oh, for goodness sake! *(She slams the fingernail polish down.)* Why can't you guys ever have a quarter on you. *(She looks at the bill.)* A ten! I don't want to make change for a ten! That'll clean me out!

WILLIS. Well... uh... I'll take some cigars, too... some panatellas... a couple of packs.

GIRL. I don't have any cigars... the man didn't show up today...

WILLIS. Oh... well, I'll get the cigars at the store down on Landais... just the paper then. *(She gives him the change as he takes the paper. She does not hand him the change, but throws it on the counter.)* Thank you... *(She does not answer, but goes back to her fingernails.)*

WILLIS. Good night...

(He wanders across the stage. As he does so, looking back, three BOYS enter. They are cocky and arrogant. They wear jackets which say blazonly, "Wild Rovers" on the back. One of them bumps into WILLIS, almost knocking him to the ground.)

WILLIS. Oh, sorry...

FIRST BOY. Hey, Dude! Watch where you're goin'!

WILLIS *(frightened)*. Sorry...

SECOND BOY. You almost knocked my buddy's shades off, fella. If they was broke, you'd be in trouble.

WILLIS. I did apologize...

THIRD BOY. He apologized guys... now ain't that sweet?

FIRST BOY. Yeah, like sugar.

SECOND BOY. Jerk!

FIRST BOY. Stay outta our way, Dude, or we'll show you just how sorry you can be.

WILLIS. Yes, of course...